

Contrasting electoral outcomes: A comparative study of the 2024 elections in Mozambique and Botswana

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the historical, political, and social contexts of Mozambique and Botswana's electoral outcomes and political stability. The research seeks to fill a knowledge gap and inform Southern African democratic consolidation efforts by analysing these diverse experiences. Political Culture Theory and Electoral Systems Theory were used to examine how societal norms and electoral frameworks affect electoral dynamics, governance, and public participation, emphasising historical contexts and institutional arrangements. The research focusses on electoral systems, party dynamics, security forces, and political culture. To fully study electoral outcomes and public responses in both countries, a mixed-methods explanatory design was used. Interview and focus group participants were selected using purposeful sampling to ensure political, gender, and age diversity. Surveys across demographic segments used stratified random sampling to ensure comparability. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and electoral report and policy document analysis were used to collect citizens' opinions. For a balanced interpretation, qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis and quantitative data were presented using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The study reveals significant contrasts in political culture and public perceptions of electoral outcomes, with Mozambique exhibiting widespread mistrust in electoral institutions. At the same time, Botswana demonstrates strong public confidence in its democratic processes. Regression analysis reveals a robust relationship between political culture and electoral outcomes, with an R^2 value of 0.968, indicating that political culture accounts for 96.8% of the variance in electoral outcomes. Key findings highlight Mozambique's low mean scores on trust and fairness in elections, in contrast to Botswana's high mean scores, underscoring the critical role of political culture in shaping public trust and perceptions of electoral integrity. The results emphasise the contrasting historical and political contexts that shape electoral systems. Mozambique's proportional representation system perpetuates the dominance of the ruling Frelimo Partido Africano de Libertação de Moçambique (in Portuguese), translating to the Mozambique Liberation Front in English. (FRELIMO), while Botswana's first-past-the-post system fosters direct accountability. The role of security forces also diverges, with Mozambique's forces being viewed as oppressive, thereby undermining public trust, whereas Botswana's security institutions are perceived as neutral, thereby enhancing democratic integrity. Overall, the findings illustrate how historical, cultural, and institutional factors significantly influence electoral processes in both countries. The study enhances understanding of the influence of political culture on electoral systems and public trust, offering valuable insights for future research and policy development in political science. Its implications also serve to motivate further investigation into electoral stability and democratic consolidation in the region. This comparative analysis deepens our understanding of how historical and cultural contexts shape electoral systems, underscoring the pivotal role of political culture in shaping public trust and perceptions of electoral integrity. It provides valuable insights for future research and policy in political science. It also inspires and motivates the audience with its implications for future work.

Keywords: Botswana, Electoral Outcomes, Electoral Systems, Mozambique, Party Dynamics, Political Culture, Security Forces

1. INTRODUCTION

The political landscape in Southern Africa has been characterised by varying degrees of democratic practices, electoral integrity, and political stability. While some countries in the region have demonstrated resilience in upholding democratic principles, others continue to face challenges, including electoral violence, disputed election outcomes, and limited citizen participation. Mozambique and Botswana are pertinent examples of these contrasting dynamics, with their 2024 elections showcasing significant differences in electoral processes and outcomes. Mozambique's elections were marred by widespread violence, allegations of vote-rigging, and post-election protests, reflecting deep-seated political and social tensions (African Union Election Observation Mission [AUEOM], 2024). In contrast, Botswana's elections were lauded for their transparency, adherence to democratic norms, and peaceful transition of power, as confirmed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) (SADC, 2024; EUEOM, 2024). These diverging electoral experiences underline the ongoing struggle for democracy in Southern Africa, highlighting the need for continued support and

engagement from regional and international stakeholders to promote electoral integrity and democratic resilience in the region (Carter Centre, 2024).

Mozambique's political history has been shaped by decades of conflict and authoritarian rule, beginning with its struggle for independence from Portugal and the subsequent civil war (Manning, 2021). Despite transitioning to multiparty democracy in the 1990s, the country's electoral processes remain contentious, with accusations of fraud and political exclusion undermining public confidence (Brito et al., 2022). The 2024 elections were no exception, as opposition parties and civil society organisations reported voter intimidation, irregular vote counting, and the partisan involvement of security forces (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023). These factors have perpetuated a cycle of mistrust and instability, posing significant challenges to governance and development.

Conversely, Botswana has long been regarded as a beacon of democracy in Southern Africa, with a history of peaceful elections and stable governance. Since gaining independence in 1966, the country has maintained a reputation for upholding democratic principles, including regular free and fair elections, strong institutions, and respect for the rule of law (Molomo, 2020). The 2024 elections further reinforced this narrative, as the process was conducted transparently and culminated in a seamless transition of power. Observers noted the active participation of civil society and the media, which was crucial in promoting accountability and enhancing public trust in the electoral system (Phirinyane, 2023).

The contrasting experiences of Mozambique and Botswana in their 2024 elections raise critical questions about the factors influencing electoral outcomes in Southern Africa. Extant literature attributes electoral outcomes to an array of factors, including electoral systems (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023; Molomo, 2020); Party dynamics (Brito et al., 2022; Phirinyane, 2023); the role of security forces (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023; Molomo, 2020); and political culture (Manning, 2021; Phirinyane, 2023). Electoral systems have played a crucial role in shaping election outcomes and public perceptions. In Mozambique, a proportional representation system with centralised party control has often been criticised for marginalising smaller political parties and fostering an environment of political exclusion (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023). Conversely, Botswana employs a first-past-the-post system, which, despite its limitations, has been associated with political stability by fostering strong local representation and a sense of accountability among elected officials (Molomo, 2020).

Party dynamics have also been found to influence electoral processes significantly. In the current context, Mozambique's dominant party is the Partido Africano de Libertação de Moçambique (in Portuguese), translating to the Mozambique Liberation Front in English. (FRELIMO), has been accused of leveraging state resources and manipulating electoral outcomes to maintain its grip on power. Opposition parties face numerous hurdles, including limited access to media and campaign financing (Brito et al., 2022). Botswana's political landscape is more pluralistic, with robust opposition parties actively participating in elections. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has historically dominated, but recent elections have seen increased competitiveness, reflecting the maturation of democracy (Phirinyane, 2023).

The role of security forces in electoral processes further highlights the divergence between the two nations. In Mozambique, security forces have been implicated in voter intimidation and suppression, exacerbating tensions and undermining electoral credibility (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023). In contrast, Botswana's security forces have maintained a neutral stance, contributing to the peaceful conduct of elections and reinforcing public trust (Molomo, 2020). Political culture is another crucial factor influencing electoral outcomes (Brito et al., 2022; Hernández, 2021). Mozambique's political culture is shaped by a history of conflict and authoritarianism, leading to polarised electoral contests and a lack of trust in democratic institutions (Manning, 2021). On the other hand, Botswana boasts a culture of civic engagement and respect for democratic norms, which has been linked to political stability and peaceful power transitions (Phirinyane, 2023). The research will focus on the influence of security forces and political culture on electoral processes in Mozambique and Botswana, aiming to understand how these factors affect the credibility, fairness, and outcomes of elections in each country. One key area of investigation will be the impact of security forces on electoral integrity. This involves examining how the actions of security forces—ranging from voter intimidation and suppression in Mozambique to neutrality and impartiality in Botswana—shape public trust in the electoral process and, consequently, the legitimacy of the political system.

Additionally, the research will explore the role of political culture in shaping electoral outcomes. This includes investigating how political cultures, influenced by historical, social, and political factors, affect voter behaviour, political polarisation, and the overall electoral environment. The study will examine the role of conflict, authoritarianism, and civic engagement in shaping a contentious or cooperative political landscape.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis will be conducted between Mozambique and Botswana to draw contrasts between their electoral experiences. This analysis will identify lessons that can be learned from Botswana's peaceful elections and seek to understand the implications of Mozambique's challenges for democratic consolidation and institutional trust.

Ultimately, the research will investigate the long-term implications for democratic stability, examining how security forces and political culture contribute to or hinder the establishment and maintenance of sustained democratic practices and peaceful power transitions. By examining how these factors interact with electoral processes, this research seeks to offer valuable insights into how security and cultural elements can either reinforce or undermine democracy in African contexts.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The stark differences in the electoral outcomes and subsequent political stability in Mozambique and Botswana underscore a significant gap in understanding the underlying factors contributing to these divergent paths. Violent protests, allegations of voter suppression, and widespread dissatisfaction with the electoral process marked Mozambique's 2024 elections. These events have heightened concerns about the role of electoral systems, party dynamics, and security forces in either fostering or undermining political stability. The protests in Mozambique reflect broader issues related to political exclusion, a lack of trust in democratic institutions, and the contested role of the state in ensuring free and fair elections (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023).

In contrast, Botswana's 2024 elections were celebrated for their orderly process and peaceful power transfer, exemplifying its long-standing commitment to democratic norms. Botswana's electoral framework, characterised by its first-past-the-post system and independent electoral commission, has often fostered political stability and public trust (Molomo, 2020). However, questions remain about how Botswana's unique political culture and the neutral role of its security forces contribute to these outcomes and whether these factors are replicable in other contexts within Southern Africa.

The broader implications of these dynamics may be evident in the governance and development trajectories of the two countries. In Mozambique, contested elections have frequently hindered effective governance and diverted resources from pressing developmental needs, such as poverty alleviation and infrastructure development (Brito et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Botswana's successful elections have bolstered its reputation as a stable democracy, attracting foreign investment and fostering socio-economic progress (Molomo, 2020). Against this backdrop, this paper aimed to investigate the historical, political, and social contexts that shaped these contrasting electoral outcomes. Examining these issues, the research aims to fill the existing knowledge gap and contribute to the growing literature on electoral processes and political stability in Southern Africa. Understanding the divergent experiences of Mozambique and Botswana not only offers insights into their respective political trajectories but also provides valuable lessons for other countries facing similar challenges in democratic consolidation.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To analyse the electoral systems and party dynamics in Mozambique and Botswana
- ii. To investigate the role of security forces in the electoral processes of both countries
- iii. To assess the impact of political culture on electoral outcomes and public response

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What historical and political contexts shaped the electoral systems in Mozambique and Botswana
- ii. How do the roles of security forces differ in the electoral processes of the two countries?
- iii. How does political culture impact public perception and response to electoral outcomes?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Political Culture Theory

Political Culture Theory posits that a society's norms, values, and attitudes influence its political institutions, behaviour, and outcomes. Almond and Verba (1963) emphasise three types of political cultures: parochial, subject, and participant, each reflecting different levels of political awareness and engagement. In the Mozambican context, the political culture is predominantly characterised by a "subject" orientation, where citizens often feel alienated from the political process due to historical legacies of conflict and authoritarianism (Manning, 2021). This culture has fostered mistrust in democratic institutions, with the electorate perceiving elections as a formality rather than a mechanism for genuine representation (Hernández, 2021). The dominance of FRELIMO has further entrenched this political culture, created a cycle of political apathy and limited civic engagement, particularly in rural areas (Brito et al., 2022).

Conversely, Botswana exemplifies a "participant" political culture, where citizens actively engage in political processes and demonstrate confidence in democratic institutions (Phirinyane, 2023). Civic education initiatives and the promotion of democratic norms have fostered a society that values accountability, peaceful power transitions, and multiparty participation (Molomo, 2020). This cultural foundation has mitigated electoral tensions and fostered consensus-building among political actors, contributing to Botswana's democratic stability (Nkosi, 2022). However, emerging voter apathy among younger demographics signals potential challenges to this participatory culture, necessitating strategies to maintain engagement and inclusivity (Zulu, 2022). Political Culture Theory thus highlights the significance of societal attitudes and historical legacies in shaping electoral outcomes and public responses. While Mozambique's political culture perpetuates polarisation and scepticism, Botswana's facilitates political stability and development.

2.1.2 Electoral Systems Theory

Electoral Systems Theory examines how electoral frameworks influence political behaviour, representation, and governance. Lijphart (1999) states that PR systems promote inclusivity and multiparty participation, while FPTP systems emphasise accountability and constituency-based representation. However, the practical implications of these systems often vary depending on political and institutional contexts. In Mozambique, while theoretically inclusive, the PR system has been criticised for entrenching FRELIMO's dominance and marginalising smaller parties, such as Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) and Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM) (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023). The centralised nature of the PR system limits direct accountability between elected officials and voters, exacerbating feelings of political exclusion among opposition supporters (Hernández, 2021). The closed-list format of the PR system also fosters party loyalty over constituency representation, further alienating citizens from the political process (Brito et al., 2022).

In Botswana, the FPTP system has facilitated strong accountability mechanisms, with Members of Parliament directly answerable to their constituencies (Molomo, 2020). However, this system's winner-takes-all nature often leads to the underrepresentation of minority parties, such as BCP, despite their significant popular support (Phirinyane, 2023). Critics argue that the FPTP system perpetuates the dominance of BDP, limiting the diversity of voices in parliament and marginalising smaller parties (Rakgoasi, 2021). Nevertheless, the simplicity and stability of the FPTP system have contributed to Botswana's reputation for peaceful and credible electoral processes (Nkosi, 2022). Electoral Systems Theory emphasises the structural factors that influence electoral outcomes and public trust in electoral processes. Mozambique's PR system, while promoting proportionality,

struggles with centralisation and a lack of accountability. In contrast, Botswana's FPTP system balances constituency representation with political stability at the expense of minority party inclusion.

Integrating Political Culture Theory and Electoral Systems Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the factors influencing electoral outcomes and public responses in Mozambique and Botswana. Mozambique's electoral challenges stem from a subject-oriented political culture and a PR system that centralises power and limits accountability. This combination perpetuates political exclusion, undermining electoral integrity and the governance process. In contrast, Botswana's participatory political culture and FPTP system reinforce each other to promote electoral stability and accountability. However, both systems face limitations, such as voter apathy in Botswana and systemic exclusion in Mozambique, highlighting the need for reforms that address these weaknesses while leveraging each country's unique political and institutional contexts.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Historical Context of Electoral Systems in Mozambique and Botswana

Electoral systems play a critical role in shaping political representation and democratic stability. Mozambique's proportional representation (PR) system has been a double-edged sword in its political landscape. While PR ensures a broader spectrum of political inclusion at a theoretical level, in practice, it has entrenched the dominance of the ruling party, FRELIMO, which has held power since independence (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023). Smaller political parties, such as RENAMO and the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), often face challenges in gaining meaningful representation, as the PR system's centralised nature inherently prioritises the interests of larger parties (Brito et al., 2022). The closed-list format of the system undermines direct accountability between elected representatives and their constituents, further deepening political dissatisfaction and stoking opposition grievances (Hernández, 2021). This has fostered a cycle of electoral disputes, with claims of irregularities and systematic exclusion during elections.

In contrast, Botswana's first-past-the-post (FPTP) system has fostered a constituency-based approach, which facilitates stronger accountability and direct interaction between Members of Parliament (MPs) and their constituents (Molomo, 2020). However, the system's inherent winner-takes-all nature often marginalises minority parties, such as the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), despite significant popular support (Phirinyane, 2023). As a result, opposition parties struggle to break the dominance of the BDP, which has ruled since independence. Critics argue that while the FPTP system provides political stability, it undermines proportionality in representation, limiting diverse voices in governance (Rakgoasi, 2021). Thus, while Botswana's electoral framework promotes governance efficiency and stability, it also risks alienating smaller political groups, necessitating reform to address these gaps.

2.2.2 The Role of Security Forces in Elections

The role of security forces in electoral processes is a crucial factor in determining the credibility of elections. In Mozambique, security forces have been heavily involved in elections, often accused of partisan actions that stifle opposition participation and freedom of assembly (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023). Reports from human rights organisations suggest that intimidation tactics, such as the deployment of police and military personnel near polling stations, contribute to voter suppression and diminish public confidence in electoral processes (Moyo, 2019). This dynamic not only delegitimises election outcomes but also fosters an environment of fear that exacerbates existing political tensions. In addition, the excessive use of force to suppress protests during election disputes highlights the growing militarisation of politics in Mozambique, undermining prospects for democratic consolidation (Brito et al., 2022).

In Botswana, by contrast, the security forces have maintained a reputation for professionalism and neutrality during elections, earning the trust of both political actors and the electorate (Nkosi, 2022). The country's police and military institutions are often cited as exemplars of impartiality, with their restrained and lawful conduct contributing to peaceful electoral outcomes (Molomo, 2020). Furthermore, their non-interference in political matters fosters an environment in which democratic institutions can thrive and opposition parties can operate without fear of state-sanctioned suppression. However, scholars caution against complacency, emphasising the need for continued vigilance to safeguard this neutrality amidst increasing political competition (Mthembu, 2021). The divergent roles of security forces in these two countries highlight the importance of institutional independence in ensuring free, fair, and credible elections.

2.2.3 Political Culture and Its Influence on Electoral Outcomes

Political culture significantly shapes electoral behaviour, influencing voter participation and perceptions of electoral integrity. Mozambique's political culture is deeply rooted in its history of post-independence conflict and one-party dominance, which has entrenched a pattern of polarised and often contentious elections (Manning, 2021). Decades of authoritarian rule have left a legacy of mistrust in democratic institutions, with citizens often perceiving elections as mere formalities to legitimise FRELIMO's continued dominance (Hernández, 2021). This culture of exclusion and scepticism undermines broader efforts to build national cohesion and institutionalise democratic norms. Additionally, the lack of a robust civic education framework limits public engagement in political processes, further alienating marginalised groups, particularly women and rural populations (Zulu, 2022).

Botswana, by comparison, boasts a political culture characterised by respect for democratic principles, such as free expression, multiparty participation, and peaceful power transitions (Phirinyane, 2023). Civic education programs, spearheaded by organisations like the Botswana Centre for Human Rights, have played a vital role in fostering a politically engaged citizenry that values accountability and transparency (Nkosi, 2022). This culture has been instrumental in mitigating electoral disputes and ensuring that democratic norms are upheld. However, scholars like Molomo (2020) highlight emerging challenges, such as voter apathy among the youth, signalling the need for renewed efforts to strengthen civic participation. The stark differences in political

culture between Mozambique and Botswana underscore the critical role they play in shaping electoral dynamics and democratic outcomes.

2.2.4 Implications of Electoral Outcomes for Governance and Development

Electoral outcomes have a profound influence on governance quality and socio-economic trajectories. In Mozambique, contested elections have frequently resulted in political gridlock, diverting attention from critical developmental priorities, such as poverty alleviation and infrastructure development (Brito et al., 2022). The lack of credible elections has also hindered international donor confidence, limiting foreign aid and investment flows essential for addressing the country's developmental challenges (Moyo, 2019). Moreover, governance is often characterised by patronage and corruption, further exacerbating inequalities and stalling economic progress (Hernández, 2021). This cycle of poor governance and stalled development highlights the broader consequences of flawed electoral systems and processes.

Botswana's relatively stable electoral outcomes have created an environment conducive to socio-economic development. The country's transparent and predictable electoral processes have bolstered investor confidence, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in sectors such as mining and tourism (Molomo, 2020). Botswana's focus on equitable resource distribution has also contributed to significant gains in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, further cementing its reputation as a model for democratic governance in Africa (Nkosi, 2022). However, concerns about growing inequality and limited economic diversification indicate the need for more inclusive policy frameworks to sustain long-term development (Phirinyane, 2023). These contrasting experiences highlight the crucial connection between electoral integrity, governance effectiveness, and socioeconomic progress.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Mixed Methods Research Design

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate and analyse the factors influencing electoral outcomes and public responses in Mozambique and Botswana. The design involves two phases. Initially, quantitative data are collected via structured questionnaires to establish broad patterns and relationships. Subsequently, qualitative data are gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore contextual and socio-cultural factors influencing electoral perceptions and trust. A mixed methods research approach is ideal for understanding the complex socio-political and cultural dynamics that underpin electoral processes and outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach enables the integration of numerical trends with contextual insights, enriching the understanding of how electoral systems, political culture, and institutional trust interact across the two countries. The quantitative results guide the qualitative phase to validate, clarify, and deepen the initial findings (Creswell et al., 2018). Comparing the two countries, the study seeks to identify similarities and differences in electoral systems, political cultures, and governance practices. Comparative research designs enable researchers to draw in-depth insights into contextual factors and systemic variations across cases (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2013). This design is particularly suitable for analysing phenomena influenced by historical, institutional, and cultural contexts, as in the case of Mozambique and Botswana.

3.2 Target Population

The target population includes citizens (electors), electoral officials responsible for organising and overseeing elections, security agencies involved in maintaining order during elections, political party representatives, political pundits and analysts, and civil society organisations engaged in electoral advocacy and democratic promotion in Mozambique and Botswana. These groups are crucial stakeholders in electoral processes, providing diverse perspectives on the dynamics of electoral systems and their implications for governance. Citizens represent the electorate's experiences and perceptions, while electoral officials and representatives of political parties provide insights into the administration and contestation of elections. Civil society organisations contribute critical perspectives on democratic practices, voter education, and advocacy for electoral reforms (Bryman, 2016).

3.3 Sample Size

A total of 200 structured questionnaires were distributed, with 100 in each country. This sample size was determined using Cochran's formula to ensure statistical validity and capture diverse viewpoints. The sample includes five key groups with 20 participants from each group: electoral officials, security personnel, political party representatives, political pundits and analysts, and civil society actors. Of these, 192 questionnaires were returned and fully completed, yielding a response rate of 96%. The questionnaires assessed perceptions of electoral trust, fairness, confidence in electoral institutions, and political culture. The data obtained enabled statistical analysis of patterns, relationships, and correlations. The study aimed to engage 196 participants, with 98 participants from each country. This sample size was sufficient to achieve data saturation, ensuring that the study captures a diverse range of viewpoints and experiences (Guest et al., 2006). The selection of participants was guided by purposive sampling, which allows the inclusion of individuals with direct experience or expertise in electoral processes (Patton, 2015). This sampling strategy ensures that the study focuses on information-rich cases that provide meaningful insights into the research questions.

3.4 Sample Size Determination

Applying Cochran's formula for survey research (Cochran, 1977b), with a 95% confidence level ($z = 1.96$), a maximum variability proportion ($p = 0.5$), and a margin of error of 7% ($e = 0.07$), the required sample size is calculated as follows: To determine the sample size scientifically, the study applied Cochran's formula, which is commonly used for sample size determination in survey research:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n = required sample size

Z = Z-value (1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p = estimated proportion of the population (assumed to be 0.5 for maximum variability)

e = margin of error (set at 0.07 for this study)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5)}{(0.07)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.25}{0.0049}$$

$$n = 196$$

Thus, a minimum sample size of 196 participants was required. Adjusting for practical considerations and to account for non-responses and ensure robustness, the sample size was adjusted to 200 participants, evenly split between the two countries to ensure comprehensive representation and data reliability.

3.5 Sampling Procedures

The study used purposive sampling to select participants with relevant experience or expertise in electoral processes. Local partners and electoral bodies helped identify credible, information-rich cases that ensured diversity across gender, age, and socio-economic backgrounds. A total of 200 participants were sampled, with 20 individuals in each of five groups: electoral officials who organize and oversee elections; security agencies responsible for maintaining order during elections; representatives from political parties to capture partisan perspectives; political pundits with expertise on electoral dynamics; and civil society organizations promoting democracy and governance. This approach balanced depth and breadth, enhancing the relevance and validity of the findings.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The study employed three primary data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including electoral officials, political party representatives, political pundits, security agency personnel and civil society leaders. This method allowed for flexibility in exploring predetermined themes while providing space for participants to share their unique perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews probed participants' experiences with electoral systems, political culture, and governance outcomes, facilitating a deeper understanding of the factors influencing electoral processes in each country. Focus groups with citizens were organised to explore collective perceptions of electoral integrity, participation, and outcomes. FGDs effectively generate discussions and capture diverse views within a group setting (Kitzinger, 1995). They were handy for examining shared experiences and group dynamics related to electoral processes. The study further analysed electoral reports, observer findings, and policy documents to complement primary data. Document analysis provides a secondary data source for verifying and contextualising findings from interviews and focus groups (Bowen, 2009). Electoral reports and observer findings offer valuable insights into the institutional and procedural aspects of elections in Mozambique and Botswana. Data collection and integration were done using both quantitative and qualitative components, and finally, data integration. For quantitative data collection, a total of 200 structured survey questionnaires were distributed across selected respondents in Mozambique and Botswana, with 100 questionnaires administered in each country. The questionnaires targeted citizens, electoral officials, security personnel, political party representatives, and civil society actors. Out of these, 192 questionnaires were successfully collected and completed, resulting in a response rate of 96%. The questionnaires included items measuring perceptions of electoral trust, fairness, confidence in institutions, and political culture. They were administered to gather data on public trust, perceptions of electoral fairness, and confidence in electoral institutions. The survey results were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and relations, such as regression analysis to examine the association between political culture and electoral outcomes. On the other hand, for the qualitative component, the study conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual factors influencing electoral perceptions. Specifically, a total of 20 key informant interviews were conducted, 10 in each country, with electoral officials, political party representatives, civil society leaders, security officials, and citizens. These interviews provided detailed insights into the socio electoral process, institutional trust, and political dynamics. As for focus groups discussions, eight focus group discussions were held-four in each country with citizens from diverse demographic backgrounds, including gender, age, and social status. Each FGD comprised around 6-8 participants, facilitating rich discussions about electoral perceptions, trust, and experiences. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with a subset of survey participants to explore and elicit community-level perspectives on electoral trust, fairness and engagement: contextual factors, underlying attitudes, and experiences related to electoral processes. Data collection instruments comprised the questionnaires with Likert scale items and multiple-choice questions to quantify perceptions and attitudes, and also interview and FGD guides comprised of open-ended questions aimed at exploring underlying reasons for perceptions, experiences, and attitudes related to electoral processes. The qualitative data were thematically analysed to interpret the significance of the findings and uncover deeper insights that complement the numerical data. Finally, the integration of data involved the quantitative results providing the broad trends and relationships, which guided the qualitative phase to explore aspects such as trust, perceptions of fairness, and institutional

legitimacy in greater depth. The findings from both components were integrated during interpretation to develop comprehensive conclusions about the socio-political dynamics shaping electoral outcomes in the two countries.

3.7 Data Analysis

For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns and themes emerging from the data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework guided the thematic analysis process: Familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. This method enabled a rigorous and systematic examination of qualitative data, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in participants' narratives and experiences (Nowell et al., 2017). Themes were derived from inductive and deductive coding to ensure a comprehensive analysis aligned with the study's theoretical framework and research objectives. The quantitative data gathered through semi-structured questionnaires were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

3.8 Data Presentation

The data collected for this study were systematically organised and presented using both qualitative and quantitative techniques to enhance clarity and interpretability. Results from the quantitative data, analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, are presented in tables for easy comprehension. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were summarised in narrative form. This combination of statistical and thematic approaches ensured a comprehensive presentation of findings, allowing for a balanced interpretation of the data in addressing the research objectives.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Based on a total of 199 respondents who completed the structured questionnaires — 100 from Mozambique and 99 from Botswana — descriptive statistics from participant responses were analysed to gain a better understanding of the key variables such as trust in electoral institutions, perceptions of fairness, and confidence in electoral processes: divergent political cultures and public perceptions of electoral outcomes in Mozambique and Botswana. Using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, participants rated statements about political culture and electoral outcomes, with means and standard deviations calculated to summarise the data.

The descriptive statistics for political culture indicators (Table 1) reveal significant contrasts between Mozambique and Botswana, focusing on measures such as political trust, fairness in elections, and perceptions of institutional neutrality, reflecting their divergent historical and governance contexts. In Mozambique, low mean scores (ranging from 2.0 to 3.2) and relatively high standard deviations indicate widespread mistrust in electoral institutions, scepticism about inclusivity, and perceptions of electoral fraud and bias. Statements such as "Ruling party respects democratic norms" (mean = 2.0, SD = 0.9) and "Electoral fraud is minimal or non-existent" (mean = 2.0, SD = 1.1) reflect deep-seated concerns about democratic integrity and governance. Conversely, Botswana's high mean scores (ranging from 4.0 to 4.7) and lower standard deviations highlight strong public confidence in the fairness and inclusivity of its electoral processes. Statements like "Civil society organisations actively promote democracy" (mean = 4.7, SD = 0.5) and "Citizens feel free to participate in elections" (mean = 4.6, SD = 0.7) emphasise Botswana's vibrant democratic culture and civic engagement. These findings underscore the critical influence of political culture in shaping public trust and perceptions of electoral systems, with Mozambique grappling with mistrust and Botswana benefiting from a stable and inclusive democratic tradition.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Political Culture

Statement on Political Culture	Mozambique		Botswana	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Citizens trust the Electoral Commission	2.3	0.9	4.2	0.8
Elections are free and fair	2.1	0.8	4.5	0.7
Electoral processes reflect inclusivity	2.5	1.0	4.1	0.9
The ruling party respects democratic norms	2.0	0.9	4.3	0.6
Opposition parties are given equal opportunity	2.2	0.7	4.0	0.8
Citizens feel free to participate in elections	2.4	0.8	4.6	0.7
Media coverage during elections is balanced	2.3	0.9	4.4	0.6
Electoral fraud is minimal or non-existent	2.0	1.1	4.5	0.7
Civil society organisations actively promote democracy	3.2	1.2	4.7	0.5
Electoral disputes are resolved peacefully	2.3	0.8	4.4	0.7

Based on the dataset comprising 199 respondents who completed the structured questionnaires—100 from Mozambique and 99 from Botswana, the descriptive statistics for electoral outcomes, electoral trust and perceptions (Table 2) reveal stark differences between Mozambique and Botswana for key variable such as trust in electoral institutions, perceptions of fairness and confidence in electoral processes reflecting their varying electoral environments and governance practices. Mozambique's low mean scores (ranging from 2.0 to 2.5) and higher standard deviations indicate widespread public dissatisfaction with electoral



integrity, the credibility, transparency, and inclusivity of electoral outcomes. For instance, statements such as "Citizens trust the results declared by the commission" (mean = 2.0, SD = 0.8) and "Election results reflect the will of the people" (mean = 2.2, SD = 1.0) highlight deep scepticism toward the legitimacy of electoral processes. Conversely, Botswana exhibits consistently high mean scores (ranging from 4.0 to 4.8) and relatively low standard deviations, underscoring strong public confidence in the integrity of its electoral outcomes. Statements like "Elections are conducted without violence" (mean = 4.8, SD = 0.5) and "Citizens trust the results declared by the commission" (mean = 4.7, SD = 0.6) emphasise Botswana's success in maintaining peaceful and credible elections. These contrasting findings highlight the critical role of transparency, governance, and public trust in shaping perceptions of electoral outcomes. Mozambique is grappling with systemic challenges, and Botswana exemplifies a stable and trustworthy electoral framework.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Electoral Outcomes

Statement on Electoral Outcomes	Mozambique		Botswana	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Election results reflect the will of the people.	2.2	1.0	4.5	0.6
Election disputes do not undermine governance.	2.1	0.9	4.3	0.7
Elections contribute to democratic consolidation.	2.5	0.8	4.4	0.6
Electoral outcomes enhance socio-economic development.	2.4	1.1	4.2	0.8
Electoral commissions uphold transparency.	2.3	0.9	4.6	0.5
Citizens trust the results declared by the commission.	2.0	0.8	4.7	0.6
The ruling party's dominance does not undermine the fairness of the system.	2.2	0.8	4.0	0.7
Minority parties are adequately represented.	2.1	1.0	4.1	0.8
Elections are conducted without violence.	2.5	1.2	4.8	0.5
Post-election governance is inclusive.	2.2	0.9	4.3	0.7

4.2 Regression Analysis

The ANOVA reveals an influential association between political culture and electoral outcomes, with an F-value of 268.73 and a p-value less than 0.001, indicating statistical significance. The adjusted R-squared of 0.968 suggests the political culture accounts for approximately 96.8 % of the variance in electoral outcomes within the data set. The linear regression analysis (Table 3) indicates a strong and statistically significant relationship between political culture (independent variable) and electoral outcomes (dependent variable). The regression coefficient for political culture is 1.00661.0066 (p < 0.001), suggesting that a one-unit increase in political culture positively impacts electoral outcomes by approximately the same magnitude. The high R² value of 0.9680.968 implies that the political culture variable can explain 96.8% of the variance in electoral outcomes, reflecting a highly predictive model. The constant term (-0.0356) is not statistically significant (p=0.442), indicating that the predicted electoral outcome does not significantly deviate from zero when political culture is zero. The F-statistic is 5988.5988, with an associated p-value of less than 0.001, affirming that the model as a whole is highly significant. This implies that perceptions of trust, fairness, and institutional legitimacy (core dimensions of political culture) are significant predictors of electoral success and stability. The high degree of explained variance emphasises the pivotal role of societal and cultural factors in shaping electoral processes and trust in democratic institutions.

Table 3
Linear Regression Results for Political Culture and Electoral Outcomes

Model Summary					
Model	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig. (p-value)
Constant	-0.0356	0.0462	—	-0.770	0.442
Political Culture	1.0066	0.0130	0.984	77.374	<0.001
R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error of the Estimate		
0.984	0.968	0.968	0.201		
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p-value)
Regression	242.673	1	242.673	5988.643	<0.001
Residual	7.959	198	0.040	—	—
Total	250.632	199	—	—	—
Regression Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardised Coefficients (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig. (p-value)
Constant	-0.0356	0.0462	—	-0.770	0.442
Political Culture	1.0066	0.0130	0.984	77.374	<0.001

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was carried out based on the study's research questions to provide a detailed understanding of the dynamics in Mozambique and Botswana.

4.3.1 Historical and Political Contexts that Shaped Electoral Systems

Mozambique: Mozambique's historical and political trajectory has significantly shaped its PR electoral system. The post-independence era was marked by the dominance of the FRELIMO party and a prolonged civil war with RENAMO (Manning, 2021). These dynamics established a centralised political structure prioritising party dominance over inclusive representation. Interviews with electoral officials and representatives of political parties revealed that the PR system was designed to accommodate multiple political factions, yet it inadvertently perpetuates FRELIMO's control. Historical documents, including peace agreements and electoral laws, demonstrate how the system evolved to address internal conflicts but failed to foster genuine political pluralism.

Botswana: Botswana's first-past-the-post electoral system reflects its history of stable governance and a culture of consensus-building among its leaders. The country's peaceful transition to independence under BDP set the foundation for its constituency-based electoral system. Respondents highlighted that FPTP was chosen for its simplicity and alignment with the nation's small and manageable population, fostering direct accountability between representatives and their constituencies. However, civil society organisations voiced concerns about excluding minority parties, as evidenced in electoral reports and observer findings.

Mozambique and Botswana's historical and political contexts reveal contrasting trajectories shaping their electoral systems. Mozambique's PR system emerged from a turbulent post-independence history marked by conflict and efforts to reconcile warring factions. While designed to accommodate diverse political groups, the system inadvertently entrenches the dominance of the ruling FRELIMO party. This reflects a struggle to balance inclusivity and power consolidation. In contrast, Botswana's FPTP system aligns with its history of peaceful governance and consensus-driven leadership under the BDP. The simplicity and direct accountability of the FPTP system have contributed to sustained political stability, but also highlighted the exclusion of minority parties. This exclusion presents a common challenge to both systems: limited political pluralism. While Mozambique's challenge lies in reconciling deep-rooted divisions, Botswana's concern centres on fostering inclusivity within an otherwise stable framework. The comparison highlights a key divergence: Mozambique's PR system prioritises factional accommodation, reflecting its conflict-ridden past, while Botswana's FPTP approach emphasises direct constituency accountability, mirroring its stable governance trajectory. Both systems, however, grapple with issues of dominant-party politics and limited inclusivity, underscoring the complex interplay between history, politics, and electoral design.

4.3.2 Roles of Security Forces in Electoral Processes

Mozambique: Security forces in Mozambique play a controversial role in elections, often characterised by allegations of voter suppression and political intimidation. Interviews with civil society organisations revealed that security personnel are frequently deployed in opposition strongholds during elections, heightening tensions. Several focus group participants expressed fears of attending rallies due to the visible presence of armed security personnel. Electoral reports confirmed incidents of excessive force, particularly in rural areas, raising concerns about the militarisation of the political landscape.

Botswana: In contrast, Botswana's security forces are widely viewed as neutral and professional in their electoral conduct. Electoral officials and focus group participants emphasised the role of the Botswana Police Service in maintaining peace without interfering in political activities. As documented in observer findings, key informants credited this neutrality with fostering trust in the electoral process. The professionalism of Botswana's security forces has contributed to the country's reputation as a beacon of democracy in the region.

The role of security forces in electoral processes in Mozambique and Botswana reveals a stark contrast in approaches and public perceptions. In Mozambique, security forces are often perceived as instruments of political suppression, particularly in areas with strong support for opposition groups. Allegations of voter intimidation and excessive force, especially in rural areas, reflect a militarised political climate that undermines public trust and electoral integrity. This environment of fear discourages civic participation, further polarising the electorate and eroding confidence in democratic processes. Conversely, Botswana's security forces are widely regarded as neutral and professional, contributing to public trust in the electoral process. Their role in maintaining peace without political interference has solidified Botswana's reputation as a democratic exemplar in the region. The Botswana Police Service's commitment to non-partisanship ensures that elections remain peaceful and free from coercion, fostering a climate of confidence among voters and political actors alike. The comparative analysis highlights a fundamental divergence: while Mozambique's security forces are perceived as partisan actors exacerbating political tensions, Botswana's security apparatus strengthens democratic norms through impartiality. Both cases underscore the pivotal role security forces play in shaping public perception and trust in elections, but Mozambique's militarised approach contrasts sharply with Botswana's model of neutrality and professionalism.

4.3.3 Impact of Political Culture on Public Perception and Response to Electoral Outcomes

Mozambique: Mozambique's political culture, shaped by its history of authoritarianism and civil conflict, fosters a climate of mistrust toward democratic institutions. Many respondents expressed scepticism about the fairness of electoral outcomes, citing the lack of transparency in vote counting and the declaration of results. Document analysis, including reports from Mozambique's National Electoral Commission (CNE, 2021), revealed consistent accusations of electoral manipulation by the ruling party, further eroding public confidence. This culture of mistrust has led to polarised responses, with opposition groups frequently disputing election results and organising protests.

Botswana: Botswana's political culture, in contrast, is characterised by a strong respect for democratic norms and institutions. Respondents from focus groups described the elections as predictable and fair, reflecting the public's trust in the system. Civil society leaders highlighted Botswana's long-standing tradition of civic engagement, where citizens actively participate in debates and accept the outcomes, even when opposition parties lose. This cultural stability has contributed to peaceful transitions of power and minimal post-election disputes. Observer reports, such as those from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), further corroborate these findings, emphasising the stability of Botswana's electoral environment (SADC, 2023).

The impact of political culture on public perception and response to electoral outcomes in Mozambique and Botswana reveals divergent dynamics rooted in each country's history and governance traditions. In Mozambique, the legacy of authoritarianism and civil conflict has engendered widespread mistrust toward democratic institutions. Respondents expressed scepticism about electoral fairness, citing issues such as non-transparent vote counting and perceived manipulation by the ruling party. This mistrust has often manifested in protests and disputes over election results. Document analysis confirmed these concerns, citing irregularities in election processes as a recurring theme. In Botswana, a tradition of civic engagement and respect for democratic norms shapes public trust in the electoral system. Respondents consistently described elections as fair and predictable, with high public confidence in the integrity of the institutions. Civil society leaders highlighted Botswana's culture of accepting electoral outcomes, which has resulted in peaceful power transitions and minimal post-election disputes. The comparison underscores that while Mozambique's political culture fosters polarisation and scepticism, Botswana's culture promotes trust and civic engagement. Mozambique's history of conflict and authoritarian governance contrasts sharply with Botswana's longstanding tradition of stable and participatory democracy. These differences underscore the critical role of political culture in shaping electoral outcomes and public responses.

4.3.4 Implications of Electoral Outcomes for the Future of Democracy and Governance

Mozambique: Mozambique's contested elections pose significant challenges to the consolidation of democracy and governance. Electoral disputes and allegations of fraud have often led to governance paralysis, diverting attention from critical developmental priorities. Interviews with representatives of minor political parties revealed a pervasive disenfranchisement, hindering their participation in policy-making. Document analysis, including findings from the Mozambique Peace Accord Implementation Report (Mozambique Peace Accord Implementation Report, 2022), highlighted missed opportunities for socio-economic development due to the recurring political crises linked to contested elections.

Botswana: In Botswana, electoral stability has created a conducive environment for governance and socio-economic progress. Respondents highlighted how the predictable nature of elections fosters investor confidence and enables the government to focus on long-term development plans. However, some participants from civil society organisations warned that the dominance of the BDP could lead to complacency and a lack of political innovation. Observer findings also emphasised the need to create space for minority parties to enhance political competition and representation. Observer findings, including those from AUEOM, echoed these sentiments, urging reforms to create a more inclusive political environment (AUEOM, 2023).

Electoral outcomes have profound implications for the future of democracy and governance in Mozambique and Botswana. In Mozambique, contested elections have often led to governance paralysis, undermining socio-economic development. Respondents, particularly representatives from smaller political parties, emphasised how they feel excluded from policy-making processes due to systemic electoral fraud and manipulation. Document analysis highlighted the recurring nature of political crises associated with disputed elections. This climate of uncertainty impedes the country's progress toward democratic consolidation. In Botswana, stable electoral outcomes have contributed to governance continuity and economic development. Respondents noted how predictable elections foster investor confidence and allow the government to implement long-term development plans. However, civil society representatives warned that the dominance of the BDP risks stifling political competition and innovation. The comparison highlights a dichotomy: Mozambique's contested elections threaten its democratic trajectory and governance capacity. At the same time, Botswana's electoral stability supports socio-economic progress but risks political stagnation due to single-party dominance. These divergent outcomes emphasise the need for tailored strategies to strengthen democracy in both countries, addressing Mozambique's systemic electoral issues and fostering greater political inclusivity in Botswana.

4.4 Summary of Emerging Themes

4.4.1 Electoral System Design and Representation

Electoral system design significantly shapes representation and governance, as demonstrated by the contrasting experiences of Mozambique and Botswana. Mozambique's PR system was intended to foster inclusivity by accommodating diverse political interests. However, this design has paradoxically reinforced the dominance of the ruling FRELIMO party. Historical and political analyses reveal that while theoretically equitable, the PR system has been manipulated to marginalise opposition voices and consolidate power. This has led to a lack of genuine political pluralism, eroding trust in democratic processes. In contrast, Botswana's FPTP system fosters direct accountability by strengthening the bond between elected representatives and their constituencies. While this system has contributed to stable governance, its winner-takes-all nature often excludes minority parties, limiting their political representation. These contrasting outcomes underscore the importance of aligning electoral system designs with a country's historical and political contexts to ensure fairness and inclusivity.

4.4.2 Security and Electoral Credibility

The role of security forces is pivotal in ensuring electoral credibility, with Mozambique and Botswana offering starkly different examples. In Mozambique, security forces are often implicated in voter suppression and political intimidation, particularly in opposition strongholds. Reports of excessive force during elections have raised concerns about militarising the

political process, undermining public confidence in electoral integrity. In contrast, Botswana's security forces are widely lauded for their professionalism and neutrality. Their non-interference in political activities fosters trust in the electoral system and reassures citizens that elections are conducted fairly and impartially. This neutrality is a cornerstone of Botswana's democratic stability, as it minimises fears of coercion and ensures that the electoral process is perceived as free and fair. The contrasting roles of security forces in the two countries highlight the critical link between security, public trust, and the credibility of electoral outcomes.

4.4.3 Political Culture and Trust

Political culture has a profound influence on public trust in democratic institutions, as illustrated by the contrasting scenarios of Mozambique and Botswana. Mozambique's political culture, shaped by its history of authoritarian rule and civil conflict, has bred scepticism and polarisation. The pervasive mistrust in electoral institutions often leads to disputed results and post-election unrest, reflecting the country's struggle to build a cohesive democratic framework. On the other hand, Botswana's political culture is rooted in respect for democratic norms and traditions of civic engagement. Citizens actively participate in political debates and accept electoral outcomes, even when their preferred candidates lose. This trust in institutions fosters societal stability and minimises conflict, enabling Botswana to maintain its reputation as a model democracy in the region. The divergence between the two countries demonstrates the importance of nurturing a political culture that prioritises transparency, inclusivity, and institutional trust.

4.4.4 Developmental Impacts

The developmental implications of electoral processes are evident in the contrasting trajectories of Mozambique and Botswana. In Botswana, electoral stability has created an environment conducive to governance continuity and economic progress. Predictable elections enhance investor confidence, allowing the government to focus on implementing long-term developmental plans. However, the dominance of the BDP raises concerns about potential complacency and limited political innovation. Conversely, Mozambique's contentious elections have resulted in governance paralysis and missed developmental opportunities. Disputes over electoral outcomes divert attention from pressing socio-economic priorities, stalling progress and exacerbating inequalities. The recurring political crises in Mozambique underscore the need for robust electoral reforms to stabilise governance and unlock the country's developmental potential. These contrasting impacts illustrate how electoral processes directly influence a nation's ability to achieve sustainable governance and socio-economic growth.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 Historical and Institutional Contexts of Electoral Systems

The findings confirm the literature's assertion that Mozambique's PR system was shaped by its post-independence struggles and the need for factional reconciliation (Chichava & Pérez-Niño, 2023). However, this design inadvertently entrenches the dominance of FRELIMO, consistent with Hernández's (2021) critique of the closed-list PR system that limits direct accountability and fosters political dissatisfaction. Similarly, the simplicity of Botswana's FPTP system aligns with its stable political history and accountability mechanisms, as highlighted by Molomo (2020). Nevertheless, findings reveal that this stability comes at the cost of excluding minority parties, a critique echoed by Rakgoasi (2021). While products of their unique histories, both systems converge on the challenge of dominant-party politics, underscoring the need for reforms to strike a balance between stability and inclusivity.

4.5.2 Role of Security Forces in Electoral Integrity

The divergent roles of security forces in Mozambique and Botswana are consistent with the literature's depiction of their impact on electoral credibility. The findings on Mozambique's partisan security forces align with reports by Moyo (2019), highlighting their role in voter suppression and intimidation. As noted in previous studies, this undermines public confidence and perpetuates political instability (Brito et al., 2022). In contrast, Botswana's security forces exemplify neutrality and professionalism, fostering trust and supporting peaceful electoral outcomes (Nkosi, 2022). However, findings suggest that while Botswana's security institutions remain neutral, there is a growing need for vigilance to maintain this standard amid increasing political competition, mirroring Mthembu's (2021) caution. These findings affirm that institutional independence of security forces is a cornerstone of credible elections and democratic consolidation.

4.5.3 Political Culture and Public Perception of Electoral Processes

The findings align closely with the existing literature, which demonstrates how political culture influences public perceptions of elections. Mozambique's authoritarian rule and conflict legacy have entrenched polarisation and mistrust in democratic institutions, consistent with Manning's (2021) analysis. This culture of scepticism manifests in frequent electoral disputes and low confidence in governance structures, as supported by Hernández (2021). Conversely, Botswana's participatory political culture fosters trust and acceptance of electoral outcomes, reinforcing Phirinyane's (2023) observations about the country's democratic traditions. Nonetheless, the findings highlight emergent challenges, such as voter apathy among youth, which underscores the need for renewed civic education efforts, as Molomo (2020) suggested. These differences underscore the pivotal role of political culture in shaping electoral dynamics, with Mozambique and Botswana providing contrasting paradigms of institutional trust and civic engagement.

The regression results, which reveal a strong and statistically significant relationship between political culture and electoral outcomes ($R^2 = 0.968$, $p < 0.001$), align with existing literature on the profound influence of political culture on electoral behaviour and democratic processes. As Manning (2021) and Hernández (2021) observe, Mozambique's political culture, shaped by a history of post-independence conflict and one-party dominance, perpetuates mistrust in democratic institutions and

scepticism toward electoral integrity. This legacy has entrenched contentious electoral dynamics, reinforcing the findings of this study that political culture has a significant impact on perceptions of electoral outcomes. Conversely, Botswana's political culture, marked by respect for democratic principles and robust civic education initiatives (Phirinyane's, 2023; Nkosi, 2022), fosters public trust and transparency in elections, leading to more favourable electoral outcomes. The high Beta coefficient (0.984) in the regression analysis emphasises the critical role of political culture in shaping electoral systems, corroborating the literature's assertion that inclusive, transparent, and participatory political environments are vital for strengthening democracy. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the weaknesses in political culture, particularly in nations like Mozambique, in order to enhance electoral integrity and promote democratic consolidation.

4.5.4 Implications of Electoral Outcomes for Governance and Development

Electoral outcomes in Mozambique and Botswana have significant governance and developmental implications, reflecting patterns identified in the literature. The findings corroborate those of Brito et al. (2022) by illustrating how Mozambique's contested elections lead to political paralysis and hinder socio-economic development. The recurring electoral disputes erode donor confidence and limit foreign investment, aligning with Moyo's (2019) findings on governance challenges. In Botswana, stable electoral outcomes have fostered investor confidence and sustained economic growth, consistent with Molomo's (2020) analysis. However, the findings also reveal concerns about political stagnation due to the dominance of the BDP, echoing Phirinyane's (2023) warnings about the risks of single-party hegemony. These insights underscore the divergent trajectories of Mozambique and Botswana, highlighting the interplay between electoral integrity, governance, and development. While Mozambique must address systemic electoral challenges to unlock its developmental potential, Botswana must strike a balance between stability and greater political pluralism to sustain its democratic and economic gains.

The results of this comparative study reveal that political culture plays a foundational role in shaping electoral outcomes, public trust, and the overall democratic landscape in Mozambique and Botswana. The stark contrast in perceptions—high levels of trust and confidence in Botswana versus widespread mistrust in Mozambique—is reflective not only of current institutional strengths or weaknesses but also of historical trajectories, societal values, and governance practices. Botswana's robust democratic traditions, transparent electoral practices, and perceived neutrality of security forces have cultivated a political environment marked by high public trust and legitimacy. These factors have fostered a sense of continuity and stability, enabling Botswana's electoral processes to serve as a model for democratic consolidation in the region. Citizens' confidence in electoral institutions and security agencies indicates not only the effectiveness of governance but also the perceived fairness and inclusiveness of the electoral process. Mozambique, on the other hand, faces persistent challenges rooted in historical instability, consolidated ruling-party dominance, and perceived repression by security forces. The low trust in electoral institutions and perceptions of electoral unfairness likely stem from past electoral irregularities, limited institutional independence, and ongoing socio-political tensions. Such mistrust undermines civic engagement and raises concerns about the legitimacy of electoral outcomes, posing risks to long-term democratisation and stability. The statistical analysis emphasises the profound influence of political culture: approximately 96.8% of the variance in electoral outcomes can be explained by perceptions of trust, fairness, and institutional legitimacy. This underscores that electoral processes are not merely procedural; instead, they are deeply embedded in societal values and cultural perceptions. Building or rebuilding political trust, therefore, becomes central to strengthening democracy and promoting stability.

Given these findings, policymakers and electoral authorities should prioritise measures that foster societal trust. This might include increasing transparency through open electoral observation, reducing partisanship in electoral commissions, and ensuring the neutrality and accountability of security forces. Civic education initiatives aimed at informing citizens about electoral rights and processes could bolster perceptions of fairness, potentially reversing mistrust trends. Furthermore, efforts should be tailored to the specific contexts of each country. Botswana's success demonstrates the importance of institutional independence and accountability, which could serve as best practices for broader regional implementation. In Mozambique, targeted reforms that address electoral irregularities, security force perceptions, and civic engagement are vital steps toward wider trust and legitimacy. While the study centres on electoral perceptions, broader socio-political factors such as economic conditions, historic legacies, and social cohesion also influence political culture. For sustainable progress, multi-faceted approaches that address socio-economic inequality, promote inclusive governance, and foster civil society participation are essential. While this study provides critical insights, it is limited by its cross-sectional nature and focus on two countries. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to explore how perceptions evolve, especially following electoral reforms or political crises. Expanding the scope to include other Southern African countries would offer a more comprehensive regional perspective, identifying common challenges and successful strategies. Additionally, qualitative research exploring citizens' narratives and experiences can provide nuanced insights into trust and disillusionment. An interdisciplinary approach integrating political science, sociology, and anthropology could deepen insights into the cultural underpinnings of electoral behaviour. Ultimately, this study affirms that political culture is a vital determinant of electoral legitimacy and democratic resilience. Building a culture of trust requires consistent, deliberate efforts to enhance institutional integrity, promote transparency, and foster inclusive participation. As Southern Africa continues to evolve politically, prioritising societal perceptions and cultural values will be key to ensuring electoral stability and deepening democracy across the region.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Mozambique and Botswana's electoral processes, political culture, and governance outcomes reveals a complex interplay of historical, political, and institutional factors that shape their democratic trajectories. Mozambique's PR system, conceived as a tool to reconcile post-independence factions, has struggled to strike a balance between inclusivity and

power consolidation. This has entrenched the dominance of the ruling FRELIMO party, reflecting a fragile democracy grappling with deep-rooted political divisions. In contrast, Botswana's FPTP system, underpinned by a history of stable governance, ensures direct accountability but marginalises minority parties, thereby limiting political pluralism. These findings underscore the influence of electoral systems in shaping democratic outcomes and highlight the trade-offs between stability and inclusivity.

Political culture significantly impacts both countries' public perception and response to electoral processes, with Mozambique's legacy of authoritarianism and conflict fostering widespread mistrust and scepticism toward democratic institutions. This has led to recurring disputes over election results, protests, and instability in governance. Conversely, Botswana's longstanding tradition of civic engagement and respect for democratic norms fosters trust in electoral processes and public institutions. The peaceful acceptance of electoral outcomes in Botswana highlights the importance of civic trust in sustaining democracy. These contrasting dynamics illustrate how political culture, shaped by historical experiences, influences the stability and credibility of electoral processes.

The implications of electoral outcomes for democracy and governance further underscore the divergence between the two countries. In Mozambique, contested elections undermine democratic consolidation and hinder socio-economic development, perpetuating political crises and governance paralysis. Conversely, Botswana's predictable and stable electoral outcomes enhance governance continuity and economic progress, attracting investor confidence. However, Botswana's single-party dominance poses a risk of political stagnation, which could potentially limit innovation and competition in governance. Both countries must address these challenges to foster resilient, democratic systems that strike a balance between stability and inclusivity.

In conclusion, the experiences of Mozambique and Botswana demonstrate the necessity of context-specific strategies to strengthen democracy and governance. Mozambique must prioritise reforms to enhance electoral transparency, inclusivity, and public trust, while Botswana should explore mechanisms to promote political competition and diversify representation. Ultimately, the comparative study underscores that sustainable democracy necessitates a delicate balance among historical context, electoral system design, and the cultivation of civic trust in democratic institutions.

5.2 Recommendations

Policymakers in Mozambique and Botswana should prioritise enhancing electoral integrity through comprehensive reforms that strike a balance between inclusivity and accountability. Mozambique could enhance its proportional representation system by introducing thresholds for representation, while Botswana could consider mixed-member proportional representation to include minority parties without compromising direct accountability. Legal mechanisms to deter malpractice, independent electoral audits, and regional collaboration through SADC are essential for fostering transparent and credible elections. These steps will help build public trust and ensure that electoral processes reflect democratic values.

Electoral bodies should prioritise the neutrality of security forces and the deployment of technology to enhance transparency. Training programs on human rights and electoral laws for security forces, coupled with biometric registration and electronic results transmission, can reduce fraud and ensure voter confidence. Collaborative frameworks among security agencies, electoral bodies, and civil society should be established to facilitate peaceful and transparent elections. Additionally, both countries should enhance voter accessibility, particularly in marginalised and remote areas, to promote inclusivity in electoral participation.

Civil society organisations play a crucial role in fostering a culture of political inclusivity and civic engagement. Through targeted civic education campaigns, especially for youth and women, CSOs can encourage active participation and issue-based politics. They should also facilitate conflict resolution mechanisms to address election-related tensions, particularly in Mozambique. Digital platforms offer a powerful tool for CSOs to combat misinformation and engage younger demographics in democratic processes. These efforts will help shift political culture toward trust, fairness, and accountability.

Researchers can contribute by exploring electoral system designs, the role of technology, and the transformation of political culture in Southern Africa. Comparative studies on hybrid electoral systems, such as mixed-member proportional representation, can offer valuable insights into striking a balance between stability and inclusivity. Investigating how regional organisations, like SADC, promote democracy and analysing the link between electoral outcomes and socio-economic development can offer guidance on policy and governance reform. These research efforts will ensure evidence-based strategies to strengthen democracy and governance in the region.

The comparison reveals that Mozambique's proportional representation (PR) system struggles with inclusivity and power consolidation, resulting in the entrenched dominance of the ruling FRELIMO party and fragile democratic conditions. In contrast, Botswana's first-past-the-post (FPTP) system promotes direct accountability but limits political pluralism by marginalising minority parties.

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